

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Agricultural Economics Division  
Washington 25, D. C.

April 1956

Notes on the Present Livestock Situation  
By Harold F. Breimyer

1. The cattle cycle still has not turned down. Despite increases in cattle and calf slaughter each successive year to 39.7 million head last year, the January 1, 1956 cattle inventory reached a new high of 97.5 million. It was up 873,000 from January 1955. Cow numbers, however, were unchanged, as a small decrease in milk cows offset an increase in beef cows.

Table 1.- Number of livestock on farms and ranches January 1,  
United States, 1949 to date

Year	Number on farms January 1					Index numbers, by groups (1947-49 = 100)			
	All cattle and calves	All sheep and lambs	Hogs	Horses and mules	Chick-ens	Total live-stock and poultry	Meat animals	Milk cattle	Poul-try
	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head				
1949	76,830	30,943	56,257	8,498	430,876	98	98	97	96
1950	77,963	29,826	58,937	7,781	456,549	100	100	97	102
1951	82,083	30,633	62,269	7,036	430,988	104	105	96	96
1952	88,072	31,982	62,117	6,150	426,555	108	110	95	96
1953	94,241	31,900	51,755	5,403	398,158	109	112	97	90
1954	95,679	31,356	45,114	4,791	396,776	108	111	98	89
1955	96,592	31,582	50,474	4,309	390,708	110	114	96	88
1956 <sup>1/</sup>	97,465	31,109	55,088	3,962	382,218	112	116	95	86

<sup>1/</sup> Preliminary

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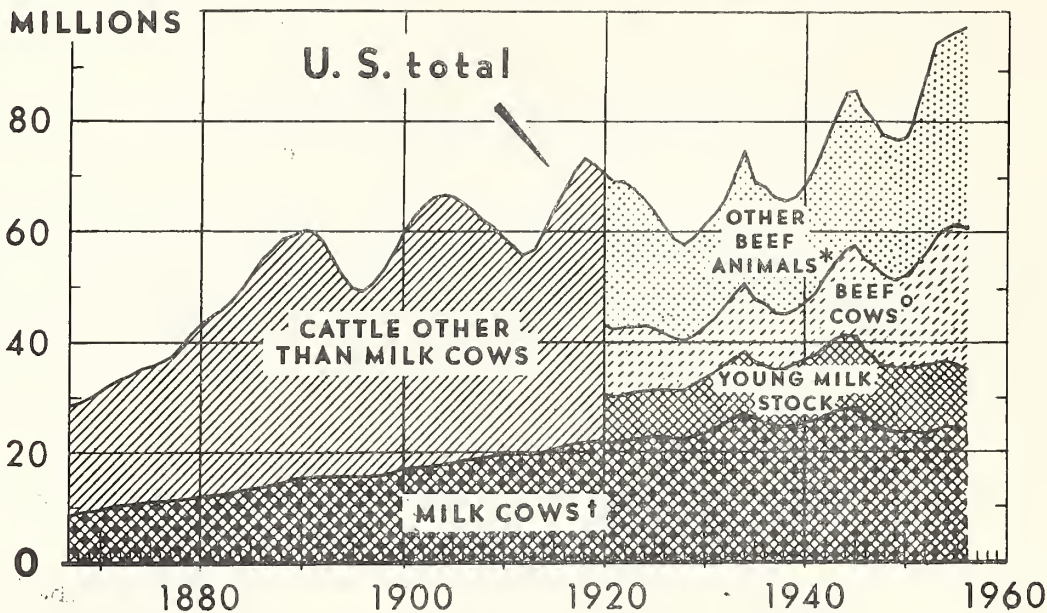
Year	Number on farms January 1					Index numbers, by groups (1947-49 = 100)			
	All	All		Horses	Chick-	Total			
	cattle	sheep	Hogs	and	ens	live-	Meat	Milk	Poul-
	and	and		mules		stock	animals	cattle	try
	calves	lambs				and			
						poultry			
	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000				
	head	head	head	head	head				
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## CATTLE ON FARMS JAN. 1

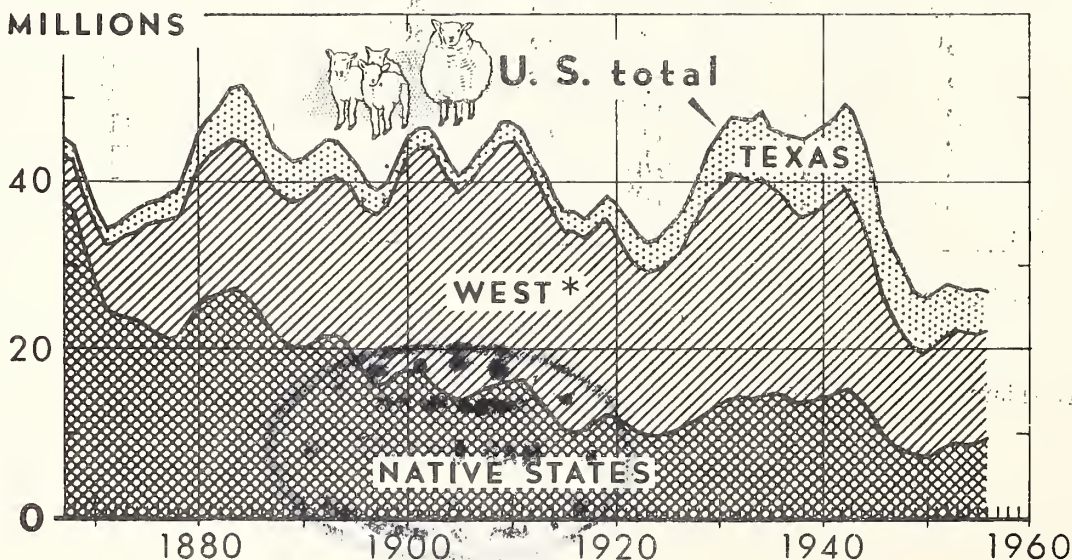


\* HEIFERS & CALVES NOT FOR MILK, AND ALL STEERS & BULLS 2 YRS. & OLDER NOT FOR MILK  
 † COWS & HEIFERS 2 YRS. & OLDER FOR MILK DATA FOR 1956 ARE PRELIMINARY

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 430A-55 (2) AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

## STOCK SHEEP AND LAMBS ON FARMS JAN. 1



\* 11 WESTERN STATES AND S. DAK.

DATA FOR 1956 ARE PRELIMINARY

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 431-56 (2) AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE



2. Slaughter of female stock has increased rapidly -- enough to halt the increase in cows on farms and to reduce heifer numbers this past January.

Table 2.- Slaughter of cows and heifers under Federal inspection and number on farms January 1, United States, 1952 to date

Year	Slaughter under Federal inspection				Number on farms January 1				
	Cows		Heifers		Cows			Heifers	
	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head
1952	4,090	1,408	5,498	23,060	20,863	43,923	5,694	5,971	11,665
1953	5,591	2,049	7,640	23,549	23,291	46,840	5,893	6,535	12,428
1954	6,236	2,472	8,708	23,896	25,050	48,946	5,873	6,365	12,238
1955	6,656	2,674	9,330	23,462	25,659	49,121	5,786	6,514	12,300
1956 <u>1/</u>	:	:	:	23,318	25,758	49,076	5,492	6,293	11,785

1/ Preliminary.

3. But calf crops have been exceptionally large, while slaughter of calves and steers in 1955 was not sufficient to prevent a build-up of young stock on farms this January.

Table 3.- Calf crops, and number of beef calves and steers on farms, United States, 1952 to date

Year	Number calves born	Number born as a percentage of cows and 2-yr. old heifers on farms Jan. 1 <u>1/</u>	Number on farms January 1	
			Beef calves	Beef steers
	1,000 head	Percent	1,000 head	1,000 head
1952	43,959	86	15,829	8,400
1953	46,584	88	17,440	9,147
1954	48,946	87	17,978	8,229
1955	49,121	88	18,785	8,444
1956 <u>2/</u>	:	:	19,106	9,644

1/ This overstates the actual percent calf crop, since many yearling heifers are added to the cow herd during each year.

2/ Preliminary.

4. Slaughter of steers has been very large so far this year. But cow slaughter has lagged.

Table 4.- Slaughter of three classes of cattle under Federal inspection, Jan.-Feb. 1956 compared with 1955

Class	January-February		Percentage change
	1956	1955	
	1,000 head	1,000 head	Percent
Steers	1,699	1,336	+ 27
Cows	938	990	- 5
Heifers	490	456	+ 7

5. The back-log of very heavy fed steers carried over on January 1 has been largely absorbed. Prices of Choice and Prime steers have advanced the last few weeks. Further gains are in prospect, especially after mid-year.
6. Slaughter of steers will probably be large throughout 1956. More steers will likely go to slaughter directly off grass this fall than last. This, together with feeders' unfavorable experiences this past winter, will have a limiting influence on prices of feeder steers and calves. Stocker and feeder prices currently are \$2.00 to \$4.00 per 100 pounds below a year ago. They seem likely to stay under 1955 prices until late in the year. Weather conditions during the year will, as always, have a bearing on price trends.
7. The fewer breeding heifers on farms would give some indication that the cycle in cattle numbers is due to turn down. But the slowed slaughter rate for cows has the opposite meaning. We conclude that the cattle cycle is virtually at a standstill; it might even still be on a slight uptrend.
8. The outlook is not as discouraging as the above factors would suggest. Of chief significance is the fact that the winter bulge in meat output, brought about by huge slaughter of hogs and of very heavy steers, is behind us.
9. Slaughter of hogs is on a seasonal decline, and prices on a seasonal increase. Moreover, hog producers in 9 States said on March 1 that they had cut their winter farrowings by 1 percent and would reduce those in March-May by 9 percent and in June-August by 8 percent. These figures probably overstate the reduction in the United States total spring crop, since States outside the 9-State area are likely to cut back less. But the crop is expected to be down somewhat more than the 2 percent indicated last December. The reduction will be reflected in smaller hog slaughter next fall and winter than last.

10. Prices of barrows and gilts in early April were up \$4.50 per 100 pounds from their December low. They were still \$2.00 below a year earlier. Prices in the second half of 1956 are expected to average at least as high as in the same period last year. Prices definitely are unlikely to drop as low as last fall.
11. Sheep and lamb numbers January 1, 1956 were down 473,000 from January 1955. It was the fourth decrease in a row. Much of the 4-year reduction has been in Texas and several other Western States. Numbers in the East have been increasing.

Table 5.- Number of sheep and lambs on farms January 1,  
by regions, 1950 to date

Year	Sheep and	Stock sheep				All sheep
	lambs on	Texas	Western	Native	Total	and lambs
	feed		States <u>1/</u>	States		
	<u>1,000 head</u>	<u>1,000 head</u>	<u>1,000 head</u>	<u>1,000 head</u>	<u>1,000 head</u>	<u>1,000 head</u>
1950	3,644	6,487	12,267	7,428	26,182	29,826
1951	3,382	6,746	12,698	7,807	27,251	30,633
1952	4,038	6,071	13,433	8,440	27,944	31,982
1953	4,307	5,525	13,390	8,678	27,593	31,900
1954	4,277	5,249	13,222	8,608	27,079	31,356
1955	4,445	5,354	13,110	8,673	27,137	31,582
1956 <u>2/</u>	4,100	4,979	13,084	8,946	27,009	31,109

<sup>1/</sup> Including South Dakota.

<sup>2/</sup> Preliminary.

12. Lamb production and slaughter has held up better than inventories since efficiency has improved in sheep as in cattle.

Table 6.- Lamb crop and sheep and lamb slaughter,  
United States, 1950 to date

Year	Lambs saved	Lambs saved per 100 ewes	Total sheep and lamb slaughter <sup>1/</sup>
	1,000 head	Number	1,000 head
1950	17,905	89	13,244
1951	17,989	88	11,416
1952	18,479	88	14,298
1953	19,600	90	16,311
1954	20,272	94	16,248
1955	20,092	95	<sup>2/</sup> 16,600

<sup>1/</sup> Including farm slaughter.

<sup>2/</sup> Including estimate for farm slaughter.



13. Sheep and lamb slaughter for 1956 seems likely to total close to that of last year. Prices have been a little below a year ago. General improvement in hog and fed cattle prices will give some benefit to lamb prices, but it is unlikely that their year's average will quite equal 1955.

14. Meat production and consumption for 1956 will set a new high. Much of the increase has already taken place. Commercial meat production by quarters is expected to show approximately the following changes compared with 1955:

Jan.-Mar.	up 10 percent
Apr.-June	up 2 to 3 percent
July-Sept.	no change
Oct.-Dec.	down 2 percent

Table 7.- Meat consumption per person, United States, 1952 to date

Year	Beef	Veal	Lamb and mutton	Pork	Total red meat
	Pounds	Pounds	Pounds	Pounds	Pounds
1952	61.5	7.1	4.1	71.6	144.3
1953	76.7	9.5	4.6	62.9	153.7
1954	79.2	9.9	4.5	59.7	153.3
1955 <sup>1/</sup>	81.2	9.4	4.6	66.0	161.2
1956 <sup>2/</sup>	82.5	9.2	4.4	66.5	162.5

<sup>1/</sup> Preliminary.

<sup>2/</sup> Forecast.

15. 1956 total meat consumption per person is forecast at 162.5 pounds. Beef would be up 1 pound from last year, pork 1/2 pound. Beef would set a new high.

16. Relatively larger production of beef than of pork is being aided, on the demand side, by stronger demand for beef than pork. The percent of the consumer's dollar spent for beef has stayed at around 2.75 percent. The percent spent for pork, which once was 3.0 percent, is now less than 2.0 percent.



